obliged in my presence to correct his statement under the pressure of making objections on the part of a considerable number of other natives. See also Father Boelaert, Nkunge Lexon, 1938, p. 88, and Congo, 1938, Vol. I, p. 45, as well as Halewood, Congo, 1938, Vol. I, p. 870.

I. The beginnings of pregnancy

The five months following the cessation of menstruation are called bolowe. The oral expression is -kowa (lit. -kowa meaning "have")

A woman who has just conceived no longer has any success in hooking for caterpillars or in fishing (by scooping, whether with bolowe hooks or drugs, called lisele). She is unable to catch anything while the efforts of her companions are fruitful. That is because the bolowe is wild, that is, a cause for a lack of success (ndowoto is wild kitoko). Note that this word may be derived from the verb -kia, "to place an obstacle."

The husband of a woman in this condition is no better off. His wife's wild is communicated to him as well as to all those of his relatives who [472] live in the same village or, as the natives say, bot mpoto nyoboyoto, "one who eats from the same pot," and ototo lyanka bonyoyoto, "one who lives in the same house." Friends are not harmed, even if they live in the same settlement as the pregnant woman, nor are relatives living elsewhere.

The wild brings misfortune to anyone tainted with it. Thus if he goes hunting, he will return empty handed; if he participates in a war he will be wounded. Furthermore, if there is a leopard in the vicinity he will choose to kill that man. An elephant will detect his presence and try to kill him. A snake will bite him more readily than another. At market he will be charged more for everything.

This burdensome situation continues during the entire period of pregnancy, hence until the birth of the child.

The Nkundó know an existence (mwengó or lowenjó), however, a means of getting rid of such annoying obstacles. Of the three known processes the last is especially common at present.

1) The husband (or any person to whom the wíkí is attached and who wants to be rid of it) picks up a nkúngulí chilopod, generally by means of a leaf, encloses it in a large leaf which he binds with a thin creeper, and makes a small package of it, as one makes a package of meat, fish, etc. He gives this package to his wife, who thinks it contains food and opens it without any suspicion. But when she sees the detested arthropod, she throws it far from her with cries of disgust, while her husband says to her, "You are the one who wanted to be with the wíkí." As a result he himself is freed from it.

2) A second means is to take the pregnant woman by the nose when an opportunity presents itself and to say to her: "May the wíkí remain attached to you."

3) The woman prepares some tsúkúndú (manioc leaves [474] pulled out and dipped in palm oil). The two spouses eat it together contrary to the usual practice. But the husband arranges matters in such a way that his wife gets the last mouthful and keeps the leaf which serves as a plate and represents the wíkí. Then the husband says to her, "Keep the wíkí for yourself."

The wíkí cannot be detached from the woman, for she is the bonsángo wíkí, "the owner of the wíkí," the one who is the basis for it. For her it continues until the child is on the point of being born (etsíkí ó yélúi ótúndu, literally "he has come to the end of his growth," or yótúkema, "has turned to one side"), and then, in practice, until the birth of the child.

If a first wife dies at the beginning of her first pregnancy, a cesarian operation must be performed on her. The fetus is removed (it is still no more than an embryo -- lídngélí or lokelé, literally "an egg," or lídngó, literally "blood") so that it can be buried behind the hut. An omission of this practice would result in the death through pregnancy of the deceased's husband's other wives or of the women he will subsequently marry.